

LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL



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**SECOND SUNDAY
AFTER CHRISTMAS,**

5th January 2025

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

John 1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

The fourth Gospel begins with a very special prologue. It is a kind of hymn which since the early centuries helped Christians deepen their understanding of the mystery hidden in Jesus. If we listen to it with a simple faith, even today it can help us believe in Jesus more deeply. Let us take time to reflect on some of its fundamental statements.

The Word of God was made flesh. God is not mute. He has not remained silent, imprisoned forever in his mystery. God has wished to reveal himself to us. He has wished to speak to us, to tell us of his love, to explain his project to us. Jesus is simply the project of God made flesh.

God has not communicated himself to us through lofty concepts and doctrines that only the learned can understand. His Word has been made flesh in the love-filled life of Jesus, so that even the simplest can understand it, those able to be touched by the goodness, love and truth contained in his life.

The Word of God has dwelt among us. The distances between us have disappeared. God has been made flesh. He dwells among us. To meet him we do not have to leave this world, but simply to go to Jesus. To know him we do not have to study theology, but to be in sympathy with Jesus, to commune with him.

No one has ever seen God. Prophets, priests and teachers of the Law have spoken much of God, but none of them had ever seen his face. The same thing happens today among us. In the church we talk a lot about God, but none of us have seen him. Only Jesus, the Son of God who is in the bosom of the Father, is the one who has made him known.

We must not forget this. Only Jesus has told us what God is like. He alone is the fountainhead from which we can approach the mystery of his being. How many utterly inadequate and hardly human idea of God have we to unlearn and forget in order to allow ourselves to be attracted and won over to that God revealed to us in Jesus.

How everything changes when one finally realizes that Jesus is the human face of God. Everything becomes simpler and clearer. Now we know how God regards us when we suffer, how he seeks us when we are lost and forgives us when we deny him. In him is revealed to us the grace and truth of God.

José A. Pagola

Rather than considering the life of Jesus from his birth, John seeks to find and explore his identity by meditating on Jesus as the Word made Flesh. The Jews to whom the good news was first preached were very familiar with the idea of the word of God through their oral and written traditions. For generations God had made himself and his saving will known to them through his word and now that word becomes human, and as a human being reveals the glory of God in a way that is beyond our wildest imaginings.

This is a staggering claim and one that many then, and indeed still today, find too hard to believe. Yet it is the very heart of the Christmas message.

SEAN GOAN - Let the Reader Understand, Year A

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. This prologue to John's Gospel is a piece of poetry. Like all poetry one of the ways to enter into it is to read it a few times slowly and let the words and images speak to you.
2. The prologue proclaims Jesus as the true light come into the world. How has Jesus, and the message of Jesus, been a light for you in your life?
3. The prologue also affirms the transforming power of faith: 'to all who received him ... he gave power to become children of God'. How would you describe the difference it makes to you to have faith as part of your life?
4. In Jesus we get a glimpse of God and of the love of God. But as 'Jesus people' in the world today we also are called to be witnesses to the light. Who has been a witness to you? To whom have you been a witness?

JOHN BYRNE OSA - Intercom

"Love is the fire that breathes life into the universe and that unifies the elements." (de Chardin) The incarnation is not only an historical event that occurred 2000 years ago in Bethlehem, it has been ongoing in the astonishing story of evolution. "It is the same light in the Big Bang that is in the Bethlehem star, in the mass candle and in the human heart." (Daniel O'Leary) As we celebrate this Christmas season, may we look and listen more attentively to the Word incarnate in our world and in our hearts.

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT - Go Deeper

General Comments

This passage is the prologue to St John's gospel, a very deep teaching on the mystery of the incarnation. But do not let yourself be intimidated by the depth; remember that it was written for you; like the whole Bible, it was "for you and for your salvation that it came down from heaven."

It may be helpful to divide the passage as follows:

Verse 1: The Word of God which was made flesh had his beginnings with God before creation. Identify what in your experience was an incarnation of the Word and then remember when you knew that this word was with God from all eternity.

Verses 2 – 5: The story of creation, understood as an ongoing process.

Verses 6 – 8: the vocation of John the Baptist; recognise in him the vocation of all great people.

Verses 9 – 14: St John's presentation of the incarnation.

Recognise the mystery from your own experience, in particular the strange mystery of the one who made and sustains humanity being rejected by this same humanity.

Verses 16 – 18: A further meditation on the mystery of the Incarnation. Note especially the process of growth "from grace to grace", and the difference between Jesus and all others.

"To the end of our lives the Bible remains an unexplored and unsubdued land full of concealed wonders and choice treasures."

Cardinal Newman

Lord, we thank you for the deep moments of Bible reading when we knew that we were in the presence of a Word which existed from the beginning before time began, which was with you before you created the world, which was truly divine, with you from the beginning, and which was made flesh and was living among us.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL - Looking at life through the lens of

John 1:1-18

The week, Kieran has given considerably extended notes on the text. Extracting a phrase here and there would not do justice to his work, so I am directing you to his website for the full notes.

<https://www.tarsus.ie/SundayReadings/>

Thought for the day

We are at the start of the new civil year and beginning again is an invitation to look in two directions. What happened for me in the last year, both in my ordinary life and in my life as a believer, a person of faith? For what do I ask forgiveness? For what do I give thanks? We also look forward and the new beginning gives us a chance to start again on the Way of discipleship. Both thanksgiving and renewal are to be found in today's readings. The Gospel is an invitation to wake up, to keep watch, to live fully the present moment under God, in whom we live and move and have our being.

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